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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Thirteenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST PART (PUBLIC)*
OF THE 328th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 1 October 1996, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. SARDENBERG

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* No summary record was prepared of the second part (closed) of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER UNITED NATIONS BODIES, SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER COMPETENT BODIES (agenda item 7)

1. The CHAIRPERSON invited Mrs. Fournier de Saint Maur (INTERPOL) to describe the work being done by the International Criminal Police Organization to combat offences against minors.

2. Mrs. FOURNIER de SAINT MAUR (INTERPOL) said that INTERPOL's Standing Working Party on Offences against Minors had first been established in 1992, under resolution AGN/61/RES/10 at the sixty-first INTERPOL General Assembly held in Dakar. The Working Party had held its eighth session from 28 to 30 August 1996, in parallel with the Stockholm World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. The INTERPOL secretariat and the Working Party had participated over a period of some 18 months in the preparatory work for the Congress. In January 1996, in cooperation with the organization "End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism" (ECPAT), the secretariat had organized a conference in Bangkok on police cooperation in connection with new legislation on extraterritoriality in respect of offences against children. Fifty persons representing 17 countries had taken part in the conference, together with representatives of the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Service. The conference had enabled the problems involved in implementing those new provisions to be more clearly appreciated and had brought out the need for closer cooperation among the member countries, inter alia, through liaison officers posted abroad and the INTERPOL Bureaux in the countries concerned.

3. The 8th meeting of the Working Party had drawn attention to a number of specific measures, particularly the establishment in the secretariat of a database of persons who had committed offences against minors. In addition, the Working Party had encouraged member countries to set up registers - to be accessible, of course, only to police forces - for the follow-up of persons sentenced for paedophilia. The Working Party had also begun work on a guide for the use of police officers specializing in that type of offence. The guide was intended to serve as an instrument in the technical, legal and psychological training of investigating officers. It was expected to be ready for the next meeting of the Working Party, to be held from 6 to 8 May 1997 in Thessaloniki (Greece).

4. INTERPOL also had a fairly large database of persons found guilty of sex crimes, in particular. The database was fed by information from the police and judicial authorities of INTERPOL's 176 member countries. INTERPOL also had machinery whereby descriptions could be issued of criminals wanted throughout the world and of persons suspected of having committed offences abroad. The machinery enabled individual notices to be sent to all INTERPOL bureaux with descriptions of all the distinguishing features and the way such persons operated. Those notices, published at the request of member countries, were a very useful working tool at the international level. Their use by the police forces of member countries in the search for missing children and paedophiles was to be the subject of a forthcoming study which would seek to determine whether they were being correctly utilized and put to the greatest advantage.

5. INTERPOL had been represented at the World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm from 27 to 31 August 1996, by its President, its Secretary-General and the specialist officer of the secretariat in charge of that type of crime. The INTERPOL initiatives, the technical innovations for the international exchange of information and the activities of the Working Party had been welcomed with satisfaction. Several heads of Government delegations, including those of France and the United Kingdom, had publicly commended the effectiveness of the Working Party and urged it to continue its efforts.

6. Two resolutions were to be submitted for adoption by the next INTERPOL General Assembly, to be held from 23 to 28 October 1996. One dealt with action to combat offences against minors and the other with the prevention of the traffic in child pornography. The resolutions specified the measures which each member country should take if it wished to deal effectively with that type of crime. The recommendations accompanying the resolution entitled "The improvement of international police cooperation in action to combat offences against minors" were the outcome of careful and detailed consideration by the Working Party and should not remain a dead letter. Accordingly, by the end of 1996, the secretariat intended to start a project to evaluate the effect of the resolutions submitted and the action taken in each country. It was hoped that each INTERPOL Bureau would be in a position to send the secretariat a survey covering the measures already applied in each country, those which would need legal or technical modification and those which could not be applied, together with the reasons why. Such a survey was essential to enable the Working Party to continue its work successfully. A report would be prepared on completion of the study and its conclusions submitted to the next General Assembly in 1997. The project would be the best indicator of the effectiveness of the recommendations put forward and the steps actually taken by each member country.

7. Since its establishment, the Working Party had successfully carried out the task entrusted to it by the General Assembly in Dakar in 1992. The interest shown in the secretariat and the Working Party by the media and in political circles after the Stockholm World Congress demonstrated the importance of the role played by INTERPOL.

8. In March 1997, INTERPOL would organize an international conference at Buenos Aires (Argentina), one of those parts of the world where the situation of children was particularly difficult. The conference was a response to the needs expressed by the Latin American countries and would target their police forces in particular. INTERPOL hoped to make those countries more aware of the situation of children and provide them with a response in respect of action by the police, from both the decision-making and operational point of view. To that end, it was inviting the various United Nations bodies working in the field, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child, to participate together with non-governmental organizations, which were the only ones in a position to provide it with a clear idea of the situation in the countries of the American continent. The organization of that international conference demonstrated INTERPOL's determination to act in line with the recommendations of the Stockholm Congress. In conclusion, she emphasized that INTERPOL was very interested in the work on the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and surprised at not having been invited

to take part in it with a view to contributing its own experience in dealing with crime and the legal solutions to it. She hoped that the Committee would bear INTERPOL in mind in future.

9. The CHAIRPERSON commended INTERPOL's efforts to combat offences against minors and stressed that it had a special role to play in helping countries deal with that type of offence. She hoped that all the specialized agencies of the United Nations would join their efforts to ensure that the international conference in Buenos Aires was a success.

10. Mrs. SANTOS PAIS said that the presence of Mrs. Fournier de Saint Maur at the meeting brought out very clearly the common desire of the Committee and INTERPOL to ensure that measures were taken to combat offences against children. She particularly welcomed the establishment of a database of persons who had committed crimes against children, a register for the follow-up of paedophiles already sentenced and machinery to issue descriptions of internationally wanted criminals and for use in searching for missing children. Such measures would help in the campaign against situations in which children became increasingly invisible victims, in apparently normal situations that were not acceptable. She also stressed the importance of the study to be made in the near future of the legislative measures adopted by States to combat those offences. The results of the study would be of great importance to the Committee in its consideration of the periodic reports of States parties and she hoped that INTERPOL would in due course transmit them to the Committee.

11. Mrs. FOURNIER de SAINT MAUR (INTERPOL) assured the Committee that the results of the study would be communicated to it in due course, as part of the cooperative relationship between the Committee and INTERPOL.

12. The CHAIRPERSON referring to the forthcoming conference in Buenos Aires, emphasized how important it was for States to take account not only of human rights training for police forces, but also of training in the rights of the child. On behalf of the Committee, she requested that information should be provided in that connection. Also on behalf of the Committee, she thanked the representative of INTERPOL for her statement.

The public part of the meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.